1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

115 There were both "wild" and "village" Veddas even in the days of his youth, and the only difficulty experienced with the old man was in keeping the two classes perfectly distinct in his mind. The following facts were elicited in the course of three interviews, each lasting somewhat less than an hour. He stated that he was just able to walk when he came to the Eastern Provinces, and that as he grew up he spent much of his time with the Veddas hunting and collecting honey. The [156] Veddas of those days were a merry people, and with a most eloquent gesture the old man showed how they would throw dry leaves into the air and shout and dance for happiness; he said also that they were absolutely truthful. Every Vedda carried a bow and arrows and an axe; more arrows than one were 411 carried, but it was not clear that they only carried two; it seemed that *tudali*, a word that the old man said was used to describe the number of arrows carried, may have meant a small quantity or may have been a hunting term corresponding to "brace" or "leash." The old man had seen Veddas shoot lying on their backs and holding the bow with their feet, but this was only for amusement and to show their skill, no serious shooting was done in this way. The feathers of peacocks, herons and hawks were especially used in feathering arrows; any of these [262] birds would be shot with an ordinary arrow, and peacock was eaten as was jungle fowl, though no one would eat porcupine or buffalo; for these abstinences he could give no reason. Traps were not used. Fish were eaten, being caught by poisoning the 226 278 water of pools with the bark of *damba*, *nahapata*, *pusulpata* (? *Entada scandens*) and the fruit of *timbiri* (*Diospyros embryopteris*) and *kukuruman* (*Adenanthera bicolor*). Pots and bark 415 cloth bags were made and betel pouches of monkey skin, though even then some village Veddas had cloth betel bags, and these occasionally reached the wilder Veddas. Among the village 304 Veddas both sexes bored their ears and the women wore ivory 301 studs in them; whether the women of the wilder groups bored 184 their ears and wore these ornaments was not clear, certainly 372 the men did not. Fire was obtained from two pieces of wood by drilling.

342 The wilder Veddas of those days built no houses but lived
437

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

months previously to wander into Tamankaduwa where they hoped to get yams and perhaps some game. A number of women left the village immediately after our arrival, explaining that if they did not go and find some yams they and their children would get nothing to eat that night. Some of the men possessed bows and arrows but game was scarce, and their living was obviously precarious, yams, monitor lizards, honey and berries forming their staple diet. Fowls were kept and were taken down to the road (10 miles distant) to sell. Like all Veddas they possessed dogs, invaluable to them in catching monitor lizards when there is no bigger game to hunt, and their care for them was shown by a small shelter which they had built in order to shade a bitch with a litter of puppies.

In physical characters these Veddas[1] somewhat resembled the neighbouring Sinhalese, but were less stoutly built; this appearance may however in part have been due to malnutrition. Their headman is a short, well-nourished, exceedingly active and intelligent individual, whose only Vedda characteristic is his short stature. Plate XIV, figure 2, represents a number of Omuni women.

Unuwatura Bubula. The position of the Unuwatura Bubula Veddas is extremely difficult to understand, they occupy two small groups of huts (one of which is shown in Plate XV, figure 1) a little distance from the huts of some peasant Sinhalese. They formerly lived at Mudugala and have doubtless been in close contact with the Sinhalese for many generations, but whether they are the remains of village Veddia settlements or are settled wild Veddas cannot be stated with certainty, though the latter seems more probable. It must be explained that though this community has mixed much with the Sinhalese and has doubtless been much influenced by them, they have their own shamans and they perform their own rites quite apart from their Sinhalese neighbours. Unfortunately the shaman of these people who knew most about the customs and rites of this community was ill, having overtaxed his strength at the first ceremony performed for us, and was not able to talk much, but he was present at most of our conversations and was thus a check on the younger man, but for the reason indicated many

[1] [i.e., Veddas of Omuni. – Analyst]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
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side supported by an angle of the rock, and a woman behind her supports her and presses down upon her shoulders. The woman remains in the cave for three or four days after the birth. At Sitala Wanniya there are no food taboos, but at Henebedda a pregnant woman avoids *mada*, which fruits are said to produce diarrhœa and vomiting, and two kinds of yams which also purge and are believed to induce still-birth. A nursing mother must eat neither the fat of the monitor lizard nor *rilawa* flesh, as these are said to produce purging and would kill the infant. She may, however, eat the meat of the grey ape *wandaru*. The fat of the spotted deer also spoils the milk, and if the mother eats *mora* fruit the child will get worms. The Henebedda Veddas, who are partially cave and hut dwellers, say that if a birth occurs in the cave a screen is made round the parturient woman. Among all the settled Veddas, as among the rural Sinhalese, a special hut is built in which birth occurs. The afterbirth is commonly buried in the hut among village Veddas, and no Veddas seem to attach any special importance to its disposal.

At Uniche a pregnant woman would not eat venison or hare's flesh. The pains and danger of childbirth are so well recognised by the Veddas that a special ceremony is performed by the wilder Veddas, and a prayer offered for the safety of the young mother (cf. p. 251). We were assured at Sitala Wanniya that if this ceremony were omitted the mother and child would die. At Henebedda it was said that if a woman appeared to be dangerously ill in childbed, a Sinhalese *katandirala* (devil dancer) would be called in. Death during childbirth seemed rare, but a few cases were recorded. Except among those Veddas who have come most under Sinhalese influence connection is not avoided during pregnancy, or for any considerable period after childbirth, nor is chastity enforced before hunting or dancing.

Children are usually named within a month of their birth, the name being decided upon by their parents. At Godatalawa it was said that a child's name would be freely mentioned, but at Sitala Wanniya and Henebedda we were told that, although every child was given a name soon after birth, they were never called or spoken of by their names until they were at least four

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

when he takes the shape of a well made young man dressed in white and with a white stick in his hand. Vedi Yaka also appears only in dreams, as a black man in a cloth with nothing else particular about him[1]."

The Avoidance of Certain Foods.

It must be assumed that the following prohibitions are of a religious or of a magico-religious nature, and for this reason they are included in the present chapter. They do not appear to be connected with totemism, yet we do not feel confident that they are derived from Hinduism, as is suggested by the Sarasins[2]. In this doubt we have the support of Mr Parker who writes: "This prohibition appears to have no connection with Hinduism, or the common Brown Monkey, *Rilawā* (*Macacus pileatus*), would be included, and also the Rat, as the vāhana of Ganēsa, and the Turtle as representative of Vishnu; or some of these[3]."

Bailey writes, "The Veddahs eat the flesh of elk, deer, monkeys, pigs, the iguana, and pengolin—all flesh indeed, but that of oxen, elephants, leopards, and jackals; and all birds, except the wild or domestic fowl. They will not touch lizards, bats, or snakes.

"They can assign no reason for their abstinence from the flesh of these beasts and birds which I have enumerated, but their objection to beef and fowls, though quite unexplained, is decidedly the most marked, so much so that during my inquiries I found that they spontaneously expressed their antipathy, though it required cross examination to elicit the fact that they also avoid the other kinds of flesh[4]."

We are able to confirm Bailey's statement as far as it concerns the flesh of mammals, with the reservation that most Veddas do not eat porcupine. With regard to birds, the Veddas of Henebedda said they would not eat fowls or eagles. The majority of Veddas, including even the degenerate Veddas of the coast, avoid eating fowl, though many of the settled village Veddas keep them for sale or for the sake of their eggs, and in

[1] Both the passages quoted are from a report by Mr Hornbergh to the Colonial Secretary.

[2] *Ancient Ceylon*, p. 191.

[3] *Op. cit.* p. 415.

[4] *Op. cit.* pp. 287 and 288.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

many places the flesh of the jungle cock is avoided as well as that of the domesticated bird. Many Veddas when questioned about fowl said, that though they did not eat it themselves other Veddas would, and some alleged that the reason for their abstinence was that fowls eat dirt. The lay members of the Sitala Wanniya community had no objection to eating fowl, though Handuna avoided it because he was a shaman.

Further, those Veddas who eat fowl, avoid eating it when about to take part in a dance. When discussing this matter at Sitala Wanniya, Vela, who was not a shaman, was about to take part in the Dola Yaka ceremony described in Chapter IX, and it was then explained that this day he must avoid fowl, though at other times it would not matter if he were to eat it or not. The reason was not clear, while one man said that it was because the *yaku* did not like fowl, and so would not readily enter him after he had eaten it, another said that should a man become possessed after eating fowl it might be difficult to regain consciousness. It is equally necessary for shamans to avoid eating pig, though the reason for this was more definitely stated, namely, that the *yaku* disliked this animal.

Although shamans will not eat pig, they have no scruples with regard to killing it, but they must not touch it or cut it up. If they were to neglect this observance they would be ill and shiver for four or five days afterwards, even when seated comfortably in the cave. The arrow with which a pig had been killed must be cleaned by a man who is not a shaman, and may then be used again by the shaman. The shaman of the sophisticated Veddas said that he would eat only rice, coconut milk, salt, bananas and cow's milk for some days before invoking the *yaku*, and this man insisted on having a daily ration of rice for several days before the *Nae Yaku* ceremony held after the death of Tuta. But as all these foods are foreign to the wilder Veddas and must be obtained by trade, these abstinences have assuredly been introduced, and certainly no custom of this sort is observed at Sitala Wanniya or even at Henebedda.

The suggestion that these prohibitions have been taken over from Hinduism will not explain the equally strong objection to

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

fowls of the majority of Veddas, or the abstinence from the flesh of fowls of the shaman in communities, the lay members of which eat fowl except before dancing. Nor does it explain the similar abstinence from pig which Mr Parker suggests may be due to the unclean nature of its food, for it is "an eater of dead bodies which might be those of human beings[1]." Further, the abstinence from the flesh of elephants, leopards and bears is hardly to be explained as due to foreign influence; we believe that these animals are not eaten because they are, and always have been, difficult to hunt by a people as poorly armed as the Veddas, who were not driven to attempt to kill them on account of the scarcity of game. There was in fact no necessity to attempt to kill them, for deer were easier to hunt and more pleasant to eat; so the Veddas gave them a wide berth and their flesh was not regarded as food, and if come by accidentally, as when a dead elephant was found in the jungle, its flesh was not eaten because it was new and strange[2].

In the same way the flesh of buffalo was not eaten, for buffalo are perhaps the most dangerous of all Indian animals to hunt, and as for the flesh of the domestic cattle, it is obvious that no Veddas except those who kept cattle or were village Veddas could have had the chance of eating this meat. Once this stage of sophistication had been reached, abstinence from the flesh of cattle might easily be dictated by contact with Hinduism, but hardly before. It is of course questionable how far the avoidance of strange food because it is strange and has not been eaten before in the community is a matter of religion, but we have thought it best to discuss the matter in this place because of the view which connects these observances with Hinduism.

ADDENDUM.

[7] Since our return to England we have received from Mr Parker important information concerning the popular beliefs of the Kandyan Sinhalese of the North Western Province. This information bears in a most interesting manner upon the beliefs

[1] *Ancient Ceylon*, p. 191.

[2] At Bukdaraduwa we were told that once, two or three generations ago, a dead elephant was found in the jungle but its flesh was not eaten.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

from trees. Besides the *bambara* other species including the small stingless bee supply a considerable quantity. The first two months of our sojourn in the Vedda country (January and February) was at a time when honey was particularly scarce, and even at the end of March and in April it was not abundant, yet such was the courtesy of the Veddas that each community managed to make us a small present of honey, though this often entailed a long search and the combs were frequently full of grubs. In two communities only, which were better off than the others, namely Danigala and Kulukalaeba, were we given large pots of strained honey, the remains of the previous year's store.

The manner in which *bambara* colonies are regarded as property has been discussed in Chapter V. Writing in 1886 Nevill says, "Honey forms a great part of their diet. It is eaten fresh in large quantities, wax and all; combs with young bees in them being considered especially wholesome. It was also the practice formerly to store strips of dried meat in honey, filling in a cavity of some tree with it, the cavity being first lined with clay. At present they barter away their surplus meat and honey, during the hunting season, and keep no store for the rainy season. This often brings privation and is one cause of the rapid decrease in their numbers.

"They tell me their health is never so good as when their food largely consists of yams and honey.

"To procure honey they rapidly cut open hollow trees, even of the hardest wood; and to take the hives of the large black bambara bee, they make long ladders of cane, called 'rang kendiya,' by which they descend precipices, and cut off the combs adhering to their sides.

"They do this at night, generally, as the bees are not so savage then; and smoke them with a sort of resin. The hives are often cut off with a sort of wooden sword, made for the occasion. These frail ladders swing fearfully, and the task is so dangerous, only the boldest and most athletic attempt it. While engaged on the task they sing lustily, songs specially made, which appease the spirit of the rock, and prevent him from dashing the hunter off the ladder. They also go about

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

113 Fig. 13. Verda bow and harpoon × 1/5.
Iron harpoon head × 1/2.

fig. 2, while Mr Storey's book contains an excellent photograph of these people spearing fish[1].

The length of the Verda bow and harpoon shaft shown in fig. 13 are 208 cm. and 220 cm. respectively. The bow is an extremely powerful weapon, its diameter at its thickest part being about 3·3 cm.

In spite of the perfectly obvious fact that the majority of the Verdas are more Tamil than Vedda the old Vedda pride of blood survives and some of the older Verdas denied that they intermarried with Tamils.

Children of marriages in which the *waruge* of the contracting parties were known took their father's *waruge*, but it seemed to be a matter of no account whether or no individuals of the same *waruge* intermarried.

Everyone avoids eating fowl and all our informants both male and female denied that they ever ate it, though often suggesting that others might do so. On the other hand, one informant who bred fowls for sale summed the matter up with an emphatic "Veddas don't eat fowls." No reason was given for this abstinence but all agreed that their ancestors had not eaten fowl, though the majority of our informants admitted that they would breed fowls for sale and kill and prepare fowls for others to eat. Beef was said to be generally avoided though it was not

[1] *Hunting and Shooting in Ceylon*, London, 1907, p. 330.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

clear what opportunities existed for obtaining it. Deer and pig would be killed and eaten, and snakes were said to be killed without a scruple though one informant denied that he would kill a cobra.

Time did not allow of any systematic study of the religion of the Verdas, but it was clear that this had been much affected by Tamil influence while yet retaining some of the more obvious outward features of the Vedda cult of the dead. Unfortunately we had no opportunity of ascertaining definitely whether the Verdas have also retained the essence of the Vedda cult, i.e. the belief in the loving-kindness and the guiding influence of the spirits of their dead, though since the leader of the dance seen at Vakarai showed the classical signs of "possession," there seems to be every reason to hold this belief at least provisionally. The dance we saw rehearsed at Vakarai was said to be performed for sickness and in thanksgiving when a good harvest had been gathered. The dance took place at night, the men dancing in relays till daylight, the women squatting on the ground, but taking no part. No food is taken during the dance, but some is placed upon the "altar" *kudaram* (lit. cage or small shed, *T*) which is eaten by all in the morning.

The temple seen at Pellanchenai, of which a rough plan is given in fig. 14, was a building some 12 feet long by about 10 broad; it faced east and the roof was carried forward for a few feet beyond the front wall in which was a door. A stout pole (marked *P*), thought to be some 30 feet long and consisting of a young tree with the bark removed, stood in front of the temple about 30 feet from the entrance. To the north of the pole and about 8 feet from it was a hole in the ground *F*, really a small well containing water, while to the south of the pole and at a distance of about 12 feet from it there was a young tree before which a small platform *T* (*kudaram*) was built, on which a rough stone rested. Some distance beyond the pole and somewhat to the south of it stood a tree *H*, apparently quite dead, with a fringe of dried leaves and small twigs round its trunk, before which were the remains of a *kudaram*; to the south-west of the pole and roughly in the position of *Y* in the plan, a limb of a tree was planted in the soil. The branches

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

But dogs are still prized by the Veddah. Of all his possessions, he values most his bow, which is placed under his head when he sleeps; and next in his estimation is the dog who guards it, sleeping always at his master's head. "What would you do," I asked a Veddah once, "if your bow were stolen?" "No one could steal it," he replied; "the dog would not let him." "But if any one killed your dog." His answer was significant. He clutched his axe, and made a motion as though he would cut down the man who did so. 231 422 [685]

And this was no idle threat. In 1849, a Bintenne Veddah deliberately knocked a man's brains out, for having, as he believed, killed two of his dogs by magic.* He never attempted to deny what he had done. "It is true," he said at the coroner's inquest, "I killed him, and I did so because he had killed, by witchcraft, the two dogs I had reared and hunted with for my support." He added, as quite a secondary justification, that the murdered man had also practised his magic arts on himself. He detailed, with great minuteness, how he lay wait for him, and how, while he, with his wife and child, was resting in the shade, he watched his opportunity, and felled him with a club: and—strong evidence of the proverbial truthfulness of the Veddahs—he described how, by his influence (he was the head man of one of the small tribes), he intimidated the widow and father of his victim, and so kept the murder secret for some days. 648 685 [754]

None but the woman saw the deed; and had falsehood been the normal characteristic of the Veddahs, as I fear it is with too many of their more civilized compatriots, he would probably have escaped punishment. He was tried and convicted of murder, but the sentence of death was commuted to several years imprisonment. It was hoped that, having received some instructions in goal, he might carry back with him some little civilization to his own people. 648

But imprisonment was to him a greater punishment than death. He pined away in confinement, and was released to save his life. I have often seen him in Bintenne. Civilization has not done much for him. He differs from his brethren only in having acquired a taste for jewelry, for he wears with apparent pride, a tawdry brass chain round his waist. [301]

The Veddahs eat the flesh of elk,† deer, monkeys, pigs, the iguano, and pangolin—all flesh, indeed, but that of oxen, elephants, 262

* The murdered man was not a Veddah, but a low-country vagrant; several of whom have, of late years, taken up their abode near the Bintenne Veddahs, to their great annoyance.

† What is commonly termed an elk in Ceylon, is the Samba deer (*rusa Aristotelis*). [136]

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

262 bears, leopards, and jackals; and all birds, except the wild or domestic fowl. They will not touch lizards, bats, or snakes.*

They can assign no reason for their abstinence from the flesh of those beasts and birds which I have enumerated, but their objection to beef and fowls, though quite unexplained is decidedly the most marked, so much so that during my inquiries, I found that they spontaneously expressed their antipathy, though it required cross-examination to elicit the fact that they also avoid the other kinds of flesh.

They do not scruple to eat animals which have died a natural death, and have (in common with the Kandyans) a decided preference for their game "high"—if so mild a term can describe the exceedingly advanced condition, in which venison should be to suit the palate of a Veddah (or Kandyan) epicure.

226 They are fond of fish, which they catch by mixing with the water the juice of particular fruits and barks of trees, which stupify them. A similar practice is common among the Singhalese.

224 Their arrows procure for them the flesh of the animals they eat, and I can find no trace of pit-falls or traps being in use among 231 them. In Bintenne, some of them employ the hunting buffalo to enable them to approach their game unseen.† Their dogs track out the wounded animals, and are also trained to catch the iguano.

223 Tennent is wrong in saying that they procure birds with the bow. They are not good enough shots for that. They catch them with bird-lime, made from the juice of the bo-tree *(ficus* [824] *religiosa)*—and also watch them to their nests, and take them at night. Their skill as marksmen is most indifferent, and they never exercise it at small objects.

224 The most choice food, in their estimation, is, of land animals, the flesh of the pengolin, or of the iguano; and, of fish, the eel. [262] Though they eat no part of the elephant, yet he is the object of their pursuit, both for their own protection and on account of [439] the ivory, so valuable to them as an article of barter. They will steal up to an elephant, and, as he is in the act of stepping for-

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* It is curious that, while in the Batticaloa district Veddahs are said to eat bats, those of the Badulla district—certainly of Nilgala—reject them.

† The use of the hunting buffalo is common all over the island. The manner in which the animal is trained is curious. When its horns are young and tender, a string is tied tightly round the base of one of them. The pain thus produced is so acute, that the poor animal is easily guided by the cord, and answers to the slightest touch. The ligature is gradually relaxed; and, when the buffalo is full grown, the recollection of the pain it occasioned is so vivid that he will answer readily to a thin string tied loosely to his horn. With an animal so trained, the hunter can easily approach the deer unseen at night. The buffalo feeds; the hunter crouches under his lee; a touch will guide him, and the hunter advances under cover.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

ward, shoot their long-bladed arrows in the soft fleshy part under the forearm, and so disable him.*

They have a great dread of meeting elephants at night, and have charms to protect them from them—not only to turn them from their path, but to render innoxious the bear, the leopard, and the wild boar. And I must here record, that they are the only charms I have entire faith in.

I never shall forget the first time one of these Veddah charms was recited for my edification. It was midnight; I was in the heart of a dense and gloomy forest, twenty miles from any habitation. The moon had not quite risen, and the stems of the trees and the gigantic pendent creepers were flickering in the uncertain light cast by the torches, which my Veddah guides, gliding through the forest, bore before me. I was chatting to an intelligent Veddah by my side and then learnt for the first time, that they had charms, having been till then, like Tennent, ignorant of the fact.† I begged him to recite one—and, in an instant, the forest re-echoed with such unearthly yells, that I felt he would be a bold bear indeed, whose heart did not die within him, and whose legs did not carry him far out of hearing of the repeated and discordant "behegang! wirooowee! wiroowah!" which formed the burden of the charm. Of its perfect efficacy, my friend had no doubt; nor indeed had I, but he was rather huffed when I suggested that the mere noise may have had something to do with its success.‡

Honey, and the grub in the comb, before it becomes the bee, are both staple food with the Veddahs, and their acuteness in discovering hives, when bee-hunting, is very remarkable. I have seen a Veddah stealing through the forest, suddenly stop—listen for an instant with uplifted hand—dart off into the jungle and return in an incredibly short space of time with a fresh honey-comb; while I have been in vain endeavouring

* This fact I established beyond a doubt. I questioned many Veddahs on that practice, which Knox treats as a fable, p. 63, viz., striking an axe into the sole of an elephant's foot; and I was assured by several that, though they never practise it themselves, the Veddahs of Batticaloa do, and that they even hamstring elephants. To those who know the pluck and dexterity of the professed elephant catchers in the north of the island, there is nothing extraordinary or incredible in a Veddah approaching sufficiently close to an elephant to wound his foot or to hamstring him. But I have inquired, and cannot satisfactorily establish the truth of the statement; and I confess that I am inclined to doubt their physical power to do either.

† Tennent, vol. ii, part ix, chap. iii, p. 448, 2nd edit.

‡ Tennent, vol. i, part ii, chap. i, p. 139, gives a lamentable account of the inefficacy of a charm for bears. I dare say the unhappy moorman there mentioned would have been more fortunate had he known the Veddah charm. The Singhalese have charms for the same purpose; but they differ from those of the Veddahs.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

262 171 Almost omnivorous, I have before remarked their scrupulous abstinence from the flesh of cows and fowls, though they can assign no reason for it. Now, though good Buddhists as well as Hindús reject the flesh of cows, yet since the Veddahs have never associated with their Buddhist neighbours, they cannot have acquired this prejudice from them.

And though all over the south-east part of Ceylon, where even the superstitious awe of Skanda extends, the cock, the device on his banner, is to a certain degree respected; yet, since the Veddahs care no more for Skanda than they do for all the other gods in the Hindú Pantheon—the very names of whom, *as gods*, are unknown to them, they would not respect his sacred cock.* In

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789 but Pasé-B'uddho—the only single allusion to Buddhism among them; but the very meaning of this and other charms is unknown to the Veddahs. They are repeated by rote; they do not pause to understand them, and could not if they would. It is enough for them, as for most Oriental people, that a particular formula is to serve a particular purpose.

Veddah Charm for Protection against a Wild Boar.

539

Ira deyené ôkma.	Boar (?) of the sun-god!
Sanda deyené ôkma.	Boar (?) of the moon-god!
Pasé budené ôkma.	Boar (?) of the Pasé Buddha!
Situ ôkma situ.	Stay, boar, stay!

Singhalese Charm for Tooth ache.

Ira deyené myā!	Worm of the sun-god!
Sanda deyené myā!	Worm of the moon-god!
Pasé Budené myā!	Worm of the Pasé Buddha!
Daté nositoo dat myā!	Stay not in the tooth, thou tooth-worm!

171 These are identical; yet the Veddahs and the Singhalese certainly do not associate so closely as to borrow one another's charms. Have they descended in each race since the time they were one? The term *ôkma* I can get no satisfactory explanation of. It is not Singhalese, certainly. I assume it means "wild boar", as this is the charm to arrest a boar in the path; but it is not the term used by the Veddahs for a boar in ordinary conversation. The allusion to the Pasé, or Pachó, Buddha, is curious as occurring in both; the one people being anything but Buddhist, while Buddhism is the religion of the other. As Gotama Buddha visited Ceylon long anterior to the final establishment of Buddhism in Ceylon, and descended in Bintenne, may not this solitary allusion to the religion have been handed down in this form among the Veddahs from a period even before the invasion by Wijalja? In the form of a charm which is repeated by rote, such an allusion would be most naturally retained. So far from having any Buddhist tendencies, they do not even show the slightest outward respect in the presence of a Buddhist priest. The other Veddah charms are, I believe, quite unlike those of the Singhalese, but on that point I am still making inquiries; aided, as I have been throughout, by Mr. De Loysa, the able and intelligent modhar of Benlotta.

* The far-famed Hindu temple of Katragam, which attracts thousands of pilgrims annually from India, and is regarded with awe by the Singhalese, is dedicated to Skanda, the Indian Mars. The temple is built on a spot which, according to tradition (though it is not mentioned in the Skanda Puranas), is the site of Skanda's camp in his wars with the Asuras.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

fact, neither scruple is now a religious one with them. Their aversion to beef and fowls is an hereditary prejudice, now become a custom amongst them.

The names borne by many of them are the designations of Hindú gods and goddesses. It seems clear then, that these Hindú customs and prejudices—these Hindú names, which we find still lingering amongst a people which does not profess that faith, and for twenty centuries have been far removed from those who do, indicate either that the Veddahs once professed it, or lived in the closest intercourse with those who did.*

The complicated and artificial ceremonial of that religion has naturally died away during the long ages of isolation in which the Veddahs have lived; the vestiges of its former existence among them have been preserved only in some of its strongest prejudices, and in the names derived from the Hindú mythology which have descended as customary family designations to the Veddahs of the present day.†

I should hardly say that the cock is "respected" in the neighbourhood of Katagam; but fowls are rarely eaten by the people there, who, if they eat them, must undergo a course of purification. A fowl curry involves the necessity of an ablution of the head with limes and saffron. Peafowls, too, are rejected as an article of food in that part of the island, for a peacock is represented as the vehicle of the gods: of all this, however, and of the existence of Skanda or of Katragam, the Veddahs are profoundly ignorant. The names of Skanda are common appellations among Veddah men, and that of Valli, Skanda's consort, a common name for Veddah women.

* Let it be remembered that the Veddahs, of whom I am writing, have never had any communication with the Tamil-speaking Veddahs who inhabit the seacoast of the Batticaloa district, who are in direct contiguity with Hindús. [The inference drawn is not warranted by the fact referred to. The Hindús occasionally have names taken from those of foreign languages. Thus the Regent of Nepal, a pure and high-caste Hindú, bore a name consisting of two Persian words. EDIT.]

† It was not for years after I had collected this information regarding the superstitions of the Veddahs, that I read the Laws of Menu. It is impossible not to be struck with the similarity, if not identity, of their rude worship and its precepts; *e.g.*

"72. But whoever cherishes not the five orders of beings—those who demand hospitality—those whom he ought to maintain—*his departed forefathers* and himself—that man lives not, even though he breathes."

The Brahman is ordered to make an oblation every day to the following divinities, viz.:—

"First to Agni, *god of fire*, and to the *lunar god*;" .... to the "*goddess of the day*"; .... the *goddess of the earth and sky*"; to the "*winds*" and "*water gods*"; the "*gods of large trees*"; to the spirits "*that walk in light*", and those "*who walk in darkness.*" The reverence of deceased ancestors is then insisted on. "The Pitris, or great progenitors, are free from all wrath—intent on purity—even exempt from sensual passions—endued with exalted qualities."

"The divine Manes are always pleased with an oblation *in empty glades*,

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
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136 quite close to me. Presently one of them lit on my wrist, and began sipping the moisture as it came from my skin. The second insect quickly followed exactly the same procedure on my slowly extending my arm.

At a small puddle, measuring about 2 ft. by 18 in., I found the whole of the damp ground covered with wasps sipping the moisture.

Some idea of the dryness of the locality can be judged from these instances, and I submit that animal distribution must be affected thereby.

137 The distribution of plants, not of direct value to man, moreover shows certain erratic conditions. The most striking instance of this is in the distribution of the Dipterocarps. At Monaragala, and a little to the eastward, our common Hora (*Dipterocarpus zeylanicus*) is moderately plentiful. From Liyangalla onwards towards the east it is absent, but to the north-east of Siyambala-anduwa, near the village of Newgalla, one finds fringes of *Vatica obscura* on the banks of the dry streams; in other words, there is an enormous belt of country the opposite sides of which have representations of this important order of trees, with no examples in the intermediate area.

On the other hand I found no examples of *Vatica obscura* to the south of Siyambala-anduwa on any of the streams I crossed.

Of the Dilleniaceæ, I found *Dillenia indica* on the higher reaches of the Heda-oya, and a few individual examples—probably introduced—towards Waragoda in the north and at Kumuna in the south-east.

Of the Anonaceæ, the usual dry-zone *Polyalthias* are very abundant. Both *Anamirta paniculata* and *Tinospora cordifolia* are abundant representations of the Menispermaceæ.

In the tanks where there was water, both *Nymphæa lotus* and *Nelumbium speciosum* are common Lotuses. Both roots [227] and bulbs of these plants are eaten.

In some of the chenas I found *Brassica juncea* grown with the other crops, but I could get no definite explanation why it was cultivated.

Of the Capparideæ, the typical *Capparis zeylanica* is plentiful. [262] Its fruits are eaten by the Veddas as well as the Tamils. I

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137

Of the Sapotaceæ, by far the most important is the Palu (*Mimusops hexandra*), but its distribution is erratic. It is plentiful between Lahugala and Pottuvil, but the individual trees are not large. Towards the Heda-oya, and in the arid country west of Panawa, it also occurs plentifully, but towards the Kumbukkan valley it again ceases to be abundant. This erratic distribution in a country that favours the growth of Palu is probably, as suggested earlier in this Paper, the outcome of early trade in this valuable timber.

Munamal (*Mimusops elengi*) occurs very frequently, but does not become very large. *Bassia longifolia* I have already referred to. It is very plentiful up the Kumbukkan river, the trees there attaining an enormous size; elsewhere it is practically rare.

Of the Ebenaceæ, perhaps the most common is *Diospyros embryopteris*, that occurs where there is moisture near at hand. [262] The Veddas eat its fruit.

D. ebenum, like "Palu," appears to have been largely exploited, with the result that it is only in remote spots that it is to be found in any abundance. *D. ovalifolia* occasional, growing in patches.

Both *Salvadora persica* and *Azima tetracantha* are abundant, the former being common near the coast, but neither in real forests.

Of the Apocynaceæ, the most distressingly common is undoubtedly *Carissa spinarum*, that occurs always where treed forest has been cleared. *Cerbera odollam* is fairly plentiful in the Panawa Pattu, and is regarded as useful for fencing fields.

Plumeria acutifolia is always associated with temples, abandoned or otherwise, but I failed to obtain any information regarding its introduction.

Alstonia scholaris is not uncommon, and attains enormous proportions.

Tabernæmontana dichotoma is also to be found sparingly, but generally in damp spots.

Of Asclepiads, *Hemidesmus indicus* is very plentiful in waste land.

Calotropis gigantea is very abundant, especially near the sea.

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in waste ground, as if introduced. *Sesamum indicum* is sparingly cultivated. 137

The Verbenaceæ afford, among many others, the valuable Milla (*Vitex altissima*), which is generally plentiful. I am inclined to doubt if var. *alata* can be sustained, as I repeatedly obtained examples of "broadly-winged" petiolated leaves on the same tree that bore normally petiolated leaves. This "winging" of the leaf stalk appears to be a matter of maturity, as in very young shoots the "wings" are often markedly pronounced. *V. leucoxylon* is common about tanks. *Gmelina asiatica* is moderately common in waste ground near habitations. *Premna tomentosa* and *P. serratifolia* are both abundant, the leaves of the latter being eaten. *Avicennia officinalis* is common in wet ground near the coast.

Passing to the Lauraceæ, the most useful is the well known "Ranai" (*Persea semecarpifolia*), fairly common in the forest areas, especially south of Kallu Obba and below Degalhola.

Of the Thymeleaceæ, I repeatedly obtained *Gyrinops walla*, its value as a cordage being known to the Sinhalese Veddas.

With a rapid glance at the Euphorbiaceæ and the Urticaceæ I must conclude my notes on the plants of the Vedda country:—

Euphorbia antiquorum is frequently to be met with, but it does not attain the proportions so marked in the Hambantota District.

E. tortilis, if I may accept a *4-winged* branch as indicating this species, I observed near Buddama.

E. tirucalli is common as a hedge plant, especially near the coast.

Bridelia retusa. Rather common.

Phyllanthus emblica. Occasional, more common towards Monaragala.

Fluggea leucopyrus. Very common in land that has been cleared.

Hemicyclia sepiaria. Exceedingly abundant. Its fruits are much relished by the Veddas, and, I might also add, by bears and monkeys. [262]

Mischodon zeylanicus occurs sparingly by the rivers, but is not generally distributed.

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123 We had hardly gained the base of the rock when we heard human
[411 voices and soon came up with three men and their dogs. One fellow
412] carried a gun, the others had axes hitched to their shoulders. They were on their way to a devil dancing ceremony at a house of illness some miles away; but abandoning their project they accompanied us to their homes.

621 In a small clearing stood half a dozen leafy shelters. Outside one of
[342] these, three women with infants at the breast were seated roasting small yellow flowers. The rest of their people were at work on a *chena** close
[162] by. We summoned them and soon we had all the Veddas of the *Kosgaha*
Ulpotta before us—some six or eight men and about a dozen women and
[164] children. They were a poor lot bearing the stigmata of malaria and
[146] framboesia. There was but one old man among them. The children were emaciated and languid.

144 Most of them showed strong traces of Tamil admixture, especially
177 the women; what poor ornaments they wore, their clothing, and even their very names were Tamil; and so were their predilections if the coy smiles one or two of them bestowed on the fine Tamil that accompanied us signified anything. There were at least three men, however, true to
142 Vedda type—short of stature, wild-eyed, with beardless face and upstanding frizzly hair.

411 They had no bows among them, except as playthings for the children,
524 but made us one as a memento and stained it with charcoal and *thimbiri* to give it the appearance of use.

342 The huts were fashioned of wattle and leaves, and thatched with dry
415 grass. Their domestic appointments comprised earthen pots, a wooden pestle and mortar, bark rope, and a deer skin or two.

262 Fruits, flowers, wild yams, honey, the flesh of animals, *kurrukhan*† and maize formed their food. The meat they fancied most was that of
224 the langur and monitor lizard which they hunted with the lazy mongrels
231 that loitered about. They eat abundantly and at any hour when food
264 is plentiful; but as a rule one good meal a day is all they expect; in times of dearth they bear hunger stoically, chewing incessantly a few
26 varieties of bark they carry in pouches fashioned of cloth saturated with
415 melted wax (*itee vethee*). Partial nomads, they spend many months
221 of the year under trees and in caves. Where the *palu*, *veera*, *kong*, or
222 *mora*‡ fruit is ripe, where the hives are, there they take their women and children, dogs, and chattels and go.

515 "How often do you bathe?" I asked one of them, the smell of their ring-wormed bodies suggesting little acquaintance with water.

"What bathing for us," he replied. "We fall into a stream once in a way and get out again; that is our bath. And we only do that when our stomachs are full. When we are hungry we don't care for anything; we can eat even a man then!"

904 In answer to the question how they measured distances and what constituted a mile, the reply was, "We walk till our legs hurt, then we
[276] place our axes on the ground, sit down, take out our pouches, and chew a quid; that is our mile".

[137]

*A patch of forest cleared for cultivation

†*Eleusine coracana*

‡*Minusops hexandra, Homicyclia sepiaria, Schleichera trijuga, Nephelium longana,* respectively.

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Vela was an interesting little chap and, unlike the others, had always something to say for himself. He entertained us with charms, pleasing lullabies, and songs of rock and stream demons that came as fast as *na* leaves shaken by the wind, in the guise of bears, their mouths adrip with human blood. These he sang despite warnings from the others who reminded him that he had sucked a chicken bone, which was a dangerous thing to do before invoking devils lest it invite their anger.

Coming to a pool, brown with decaying leaves, we asked if the water was good. "Very good," said a Vedda, adding the epicurean touch, "These fallen flowers floating there make the water sweet; they are the flowers that give good honey."

It was high noon when Veddas left us to go in search of food. But Vela lingered to tell us of the oppression of the local headman. Did they but catch a young deer or pea-chick that came their way they were prosecuted. The visiting apothecary too was bad; he gave them no medicines except for gifts of honey or meat; and the poor fellows had little enough for themselves.

Having visited a cave containing the battered remains of an old Buddha, we continued our circuit of the rock; and after a walk of an hour and a half under a burning sky, came to the Veddas of the *Kudda Ulpotha*. These had no huts of any sort, but merely sat grouped in families under various trees. It was the season of the *kong* fruit, of which there was plenty about. Women were boiling down the luscious pulp with which to make cakes, or extracting from the seeds an oil said to be good for sores and wounds. Very fond of the fruit they all were; it had been their only sustenance for days. One little urchin, his mouth be-ringed with parangi ulcers, was licking clean a coconut shell containing the acrid juice, with a relish worthy of a tastier dish.

The patriarch of the settlement, Naida, and his wife were typical Veddas; but here again most of the others showed Tamil admixture. One man had a large scar across his face. The manner he came by it illustrates well the aggressiveness of the little Ceylon sloth-bear. When out collecting honey he saw a she-bear and her cub. Realizing the certain disaster of such an encounter he cautiously climbed a tree; but in doing so snapped a twig and gave himself away. With a series of blood-curdling cries she charged him, and clambering up the tree, bit and clawed him severely. A large flap was torn from his face. This his father sewed up with a thorn and fibre, and doctored with a result that might have done credit to any surgeon. Living as they invariably do in the neighbourhood of rocks, and having kindred tastes in honey, yams, and fruit, the Veddas and bears often encounter each other, as the ugly scars on many of the men testify.

As, footsore and tired, we rounded the southern end of the rock towards evening, we met parties of Veddas returning with basketfuls of *kong* fruit. One youth was up a tree making the jungle ring to his song as he beat down the berries. As it darkened we reached Manampitiya, but not before we had worried a blind old owl that had descended to a streamlet to quench its thirst.

It is hard to forget that first experience of the Veddas in their homes: those voices in the jungle, that sight of their huts among the trees, and of their women roasting dainty little flowers for food.

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136 The grass in the glades was so tall that it covered us entirely. One's only chance of encountering game lay at the forest margins, or in the infrequent patches of burnt ground, overspread with the tender apicous shoots of which the chital are fond. Parrots and doves broke the stillness of the evening with their crooning. Startled quails whirred from our feet crying vociferous caution to their crouching young, and sometimes we would flush a *pathan kukula*, a species of partridge. But the note that accorded most with the brooding genius of the place, was the mournful, incessant 'ho-ho, ho-ho' of the *botua-kapan*, a cuckoo which, try as we might, we failed to see.

361 231 The next morning, provided with a small langur we shot on the way, we visited the Henebedde Veddas in their homes. Handuna's hut stood at the foot of a densely wooded hill. There were a few cattle about which the Veddas tended for a consideration from the Sinhalese; and, what was even more unexpected, we found here a couple of hens with excellent broods; for, even the Sinhalese of these parts, as we learnt to our cost, kept no fowls. In these pursuits lie the nuclei that bid fair to tie nomadic hunters to fixed abodes.

342 [281 362] Handuna's hut was a long low structure of wattle and bast thatched with straw, and partitioned into three or four dark rooms, occupied by his family and those of his sons-in-law. At one end of the building was an open living-room in which we were entertained with deer skins for seats. Slung from the eaves, at the other end of the hut, was a gourd, the mouth 231 of which was plugged with wax pierced with two small holes, through which bees busily entered and emerged. As I focussed my camera on this interesting example of Vedda apiculture, the enterprising showman naively remarked that a gentleman had once given him a rupee for that picture; but he might have spared the hint for the good it brought him.

343 [84] [171] Standing a little apart from the main hut, was a squat, kennel-like structure for the segregation of women, during their monthly indisposition. This feature is universal among jungle folk, whether Vedda, half-Vedda, Sinhalese, or Tamil. These sheds, barely sufficient for an individual to sit or lie crouched in, are often overgrown by jungle, and only crudely protected with bark-slats or deer skins; they have a fireplace at the open entrance; sometimes they are more hygienically built over trestles. Considering the poor protection they afford, and their nearness to the forest around, it must require some fortitude on the part of those occupying them, especially at night.

252 We now saw the monkey we had brought prepared for food. A slow fire was kindled in the garden; on this the carcase was placed, and turned over until well singed, emitting a most appetising odour. The smooth stone on which Handuna had up to now been seated, and which did service as seat or platter as occasion demanded, was requisitioned; the half-roasted animal was placed on it, disemboweled, and quartered with the blade of an arrow. A dog, that had been awaiting the opportunity, feasted on the offal in full view. The head was severed and split in half, [824 264] the limbs, dismembered, and the trunk broken flat. The various fragments were then put back to roast. When all was ready, dainty morsels were served out to us on broad *kenda** leaves (the usual plates of these 262 people), with the polite request that we must eat first. A fragment of liver done to a turn, and a dainty hand with the charred little fingers

*Macaranga tomentosa.

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turned in like a child's, fell to my share. I was contemplating the proposition with disgust, when, to my surprise, I saw my companion bravely tackling his; he recommended the meat as savoury. Not to be outdone, I gingerly followed his example, remembering that the nearer the bone the cleaner the flesh. While our chauffeur not only refused his share, but, turned away with green-visaged disgust at the behaviour of his masters. The Veddas meanwhile applied themselves heartily to the meal, crunching hungrily bones and all; the brain and liver they regarded as special delicacies. 262

Our next course was a fragment of *kurrukkan* cake garnished with a pungent *sambol*; this was a more feasible dish—but for the sand one crunched with every bite. A handful of honey-comb brought the dreadful meal to a welcome close. It did not occur to our hosts that water for cleansing would be acceptable; a procedure they ignored, wiping their hands instead on the posts of the hut, their own bodies, or filthy loin-rags. The chatty in which they brought us water could no more stand on its base than an egg. 515

So far we had seen none of their women, but had heard subdued female voices in the adjoining room, and surprised the glint of dark inquisitive eyes between the bark-slats. It required no little persuasion to bring them out. Even to pose for their portraits these people wanted presents! There was not a woman among them who had the remotest pretensions to comeliness; what little of it they might possess, their graceless rags disguised. 123

About a half-mile from Handuna's hut were the dwellings of the one-eyed Poromola and the sophisticated Kaira. We found the former disconsolately seated in his airy shed, with a little child on his lap, no less wistful than its grandsire. Patiently they awaited the return of the old man's wife and daughter, with the handful of grain they would earn for the day by working on a *chena*. 361 464 465

We secured some bows and arrows of fine workmanship here, and an *aude* which we mistook for a large arrow-head; but Kaira taking it said, "This is what we dance with," and suiting the action to the word, twirled the implement, tang and point, between his fingers, or shouldered it gun-wise, while he performed the shuffling semi-circular movements of a Vedda dance. 411 535

Thus ended our visit to Henebedde. That night, as we lay in bed, we heard a Vedda stave shouted lustily into the dark. It came from the watcher of a neighbouring field on his lonely look-out, and served as a variant to the "hoos" with which he kept away foraging animals. The refrain, *Ma mini, ma mini, ma deyya*, (Oh! great man, oh! great man, oh! great God) told of soul-hunger even in a people so primitive. We took it for a token of hail and farewell from the land of the Veddas. 241 533

Embillene's only claim to a name lay in the open *ambalam* (travellers' lodge), built high on strong posts that elephants might pass through without being tempted to destroy it. Here we found a team of pack-bulls and their drovers. The head of the *tavalam** was a loquacious fellow who took the whole forest into his confidence. People as a rule talk quietly in the jungle, subconsciously respecting, as it were, its solemnity; not so these drovers; their discourse is high-pitched, from 000

*Team of pack bulls.

and ear-rings and necklaces. Sober, wistful children ate raw melons or fragments of *kurrukkan* cake as hard as brick, plastered over with flies.

Indian corn and *kurrukkan*, the staple food of these people, are prepared in a variety of ways. After soaking in water for twenty-four hours, they are reduced to flour, *kurrukkan* on grind-stones, maize with pestle and mortar, and eaten in one of three forms—*talapa*, *roti*, or *pittu* appetised with pungent sambols.

Let us look into one of their homes. It is windowless and dark, except for the light that comes between the bark-slats in a hundred dazzling shafts. There are two rooms; the inner small and narrow, the outer a larger living room with a single doorway protected by a two foot fence—a provision for the children. At one corner is a hearth underlying a low trestle bridging the wall angle, for drying flesh; at another a cage-work containing earthen pots and garish Allervale cups and plates. Hanging about the walls are rolled mats, oil bottles, baskets and clusters of sheathed corn cobs. Head-high is an open ceiling containing a jumble of things such as an old umbrella, wicker baskets, large earthen pots and gourds. On the floor is a large grind-stone, and littered about are shreds of mats, a deer skin or two, dirty cloths, a small pillow, a betel bag, a rush broom and a polished plank—certainly the most primitive chair imaginable. There is also a coconut-scraper of curious design, made of a serrated iron disc wedged into the outstanding limb of a triple-branched stem resting on its Y-shaped arms. Such are the appointments of a *chena* Vedda's domicile.

These communal dwellings stockaded against beast aggression in the heart of wild nature, the watch huts on the trees, the hallos all night, proclaim the incessant struggle between man and the animals in whose strong kingdom he is only a small unit. But for its inalienable hardships the life of this people makes a homely appeal to the human heart. Nature a capricious giver, bestows now abundantly now sparingly, and he who would wrest a living from her must have supple thews and great endurance.

Henanagalla was a place of antiquarian interest a few miles from Dolagalwella. On the summit of a large low rock in an undulating glade stood a broken dagaba completely obscured by a growth of big trees and scrub. Desultory worshippers had trussed up a slab for offerings of wild flowers. A low wall of hewn granite blocks surrounded the structure, and a half buried monolith or two peeped out of the ruin.

Descending from here and working round through a tangle of brush-wood, we came to a commodious cave quite forty paces long, showing the remains of enclosing and partitioning walls, a slotted stone for the support of a pillar and a large flat *puja* stone.

Besides these evidences of ancient occupation, were signs of more recent use. The cave was obviously a resort of monitor hunters. There were the long sticks with which the savoury creatures had been poked out of deep lairs, and cooking frames where they had been roasted. The floor was littered with their dry heads, corn-cobs and nut-shells.

But more interesting than all this were the crude drawings that adorned the inner dome. Here was a veritable gallery of untutored art, wrought with finger for brush and a mixture of ash and water for paint. There were the most primitive representations imaginable of leopards, elephants

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to a cleft fragment of stone resembling a giant lizard crawling up the sheer face of the rock.

We found Bowala deserted. The young coconut and areca palms, plantains, sugar-canes and pine-apples there were choked with grass and lantana. The huts were falling to pieces and leaked like sieves as we found to our cost when a shower overtook us; the grass thatch, ruined by white ants, was the home of innumerable rats, brahmin-lizards and poisonous *karawalas** that hung head-down from the rafters ready to strike.

The desolate state of the hamlet is explainable by the *chena* life of the people. In December, as the crops ripen, they forsake their homes for the shacks of the *chena*, leaving perhaps an aged couple behind. In April, when the crops of *kurrukkan* and maize have been taken, they return to the village to repair their huts and wean back to life such plants as have survived the inroads of wild animals and weeds. In July, *chena* land is leased again; and so the wasteful routine is repeated. A hamlet occupied for six months and abandoned for six has not much chance of headway. If the population of a village is at all numerous, there are sufficient people to occupy both *chena* and village, without detriment to either; if the community is very small they remain *chena* dwellers with no permanent homes; if intermediate, we find the state of things at Bowala. In favoured places a mere nucleus of human beings swells in time to a thriving and populous village. But in the insalubrious *Vanni* privation and ignorance keep the numbers low. Two dwindling villages may combine to save one from extinction. Often a place populous to-day is a wilderness to-morrow and *vice versa*. This is typical of the kaleidoscopic way the forest hamlets change. Names so fine on maps—Illukpitiya, Mahaella, Embillene—are found when reached to be derelict; a crumbling hut perhaps hidden in jungle, or a hardy tamarind or palmyrah the sole witness of vanished homes.

Bowala folk are better jungle men than many farther inland. Though far from fastidious in their choice of meats, for they eat the mongoose and rat, they abhor the porcupine, sure mark of Vedda ancestry. They fashion bags of beaten *riti* bark and carry pouches of monkey skin that ladies might envy. Their bed-frames are spanned with sambur-hide, their powder flasks are the dried scrota of sambur. A monkey skin, stretched over a coconut shell fitted with handle, screw and string, and manipulated with a small bow, serves them as a violin out of which they scrape mournful disharmonies. They snare the smaller animals, such as the hare, pangolin and chevrotan, with *kabbakas* or weighted frames poised over passages used by these animals; we saw one of these set for chevrotan with a bundle of urine-drenched leaves for bait. Some among them could brave the formidable heights of Westminster Abbey in quest of the combs of the rock bee—the most hazardous of jungle pursuits.

We spent the night in a large cave at the base of Westminster Abbey and made the ascent next morning, replenishing our water bottles at a small basin formed by the buttressing roots of a rock-tamarind and rejoicing in the grandiloquent name, for so trivial a thing, of *Kothurupathaha* (gnat-water-hole).

It had rained all night and there was still a drizzle. Squeezing through crevices, crouching through low caves, climbing trees, clinging to rough

*Small venomous snakes.

3. A VEDDA OF DIVULANA

DIVULANA was recompense for our toil. The irrigation bungalow, placed high above the bund, over-looked the beautiful hill-encircled tank, whose glassy surface was broken by stones and snags on which cormorants and darters sunned.

Two miles within the forest lived Naga-Kauwa, a witless dwarf of fifty, the sole Vedda of Divulana. Born in Kovil Vannami, he came as a child to the Rasagala caves, of which in their best day his people occupied four or five. Now he and his family alone survived. Three years ago he had abandoned cave life for that of the *chena* ; and there we found him amidst his cassava and the tender teak he nursed for a consideration from Government.

His stalwart sons—quite unlike the father—brought us some yams, a mouse deer and a primitive drum—the broken-off rim of an earthen pot covered with wanderoo skin and fitted with a taut fibre.

Kauwa's hut was a thing to behold. The Tamils had said, "See Kauwa, this is the way to build a house" ; and Kauwa had built this crazy thing a child of twelve might have bettered. The thatch was a medley of dry grass and bark ; the walls were of wattle, which stuck out untrimmed through the roof, and bark slats so poorly fitted together that there was more aperture than cover. The structure was no more than four-foot square and two-storied at that ; merely a covered trestle three feet off the ground. In the lower floor his wife and children lay huddled like rats ; on the upper, its irregularities smoothed with bundles of rush (primary elements of a mat), the lord and master slept. Such was the caveman's first attempt at fashioning an abode. By the entrance was a fireplace, and, scattered about, were the bones of monkeys and monitor lizards and the carapaces of tortoises that had served for food. Stuck in the roof was a broken comb of buffalo horn, true touch of civilisation, for the test of a real Vedda is that his hair must be stranger to a comb.

Getting information from Kauwa was like squeezing water out of a stone ; he could no more describe the simplest thing than he could fly. Still, patience does much and this is what we gleaned :

Tortoises and pangolins are considered good eating by the Veddas ; but the porcupine they abhor, calling it a *rodiya* among beasts, and only killing it to give to their dogs. Why Veddas never eat porcupine I have not been able to ascertain : it is said that, in the old lawless days, they would go the length of burning down a Sinhalese hut in which they discovered a porcupine being cooked. Pork they love because it clears the blood, and one or two pigs a month the Vedda must have. Venison causes itching and is not so good !

Vedda cookery, simple in the extreme, can still boast some tasty dishes : *Gona-peruma* is a sausage consisting of alternate layers of sambur meat and fat. *Le-peruma* is the same, with the addition of a third layer of blood-clot. *Goa-thel-peruma* is made by skinning the monitor's meaty

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tail through a dorsal slit, partially separating the muscle mass from the caudal vertebrae, and introducing into the space thus formed strips of fat from the animal's flank; the skin is then sewn over with bast strip and thorn, and the stuffed tail is roasted on embers and eaten forthwith, or smoked and put by for future use. 252 262 251

Young hornbills being full of fat are a special Vedda delicacy; nor is the helpless imprisoned mother spared. Even more cruel is the treatment by these merciless epicures of the young of the edible-nest swiftlet. I asked Kauwa what he did with these when out nesting. "Eat them," he said; "the eggs are small but tasty; and so are the young which cry 'ki-ki-ki' as we put them in the fire." 262

The Vedda custom of preserving venison in honey is well known. This is how it is done: Into a hollow in a rock a little honey is poured; to this is added a few pieces of venison cut up small (pork is unsuitable as the fat prevents permeation); more honey is then poured on, and more meat added; and so layer by layer, till honey and meat are well intermingled. A protecting slab is then placed over the mouth of the hole. 251

Boa fat is said to be good for fractures; the broken limb being wrapped in *riti* bark or cloth saturated with the heated oil. They say it takes a month and a half for a fracture to heal; and in this, show more good sense than certain credulous Sinhalese who assure one that their *vedaralas* can cure a fracture in the time it takes a pot of rice to boil! 752

Kauwa had many charms against wild beasts. The one for buffaloes made them bleed from mouth and nose and fall dead! If you saw a bear you should *think* the appropriate charm and tie a knot in your hair; only if the animal attacked should you shout the words. For the leopard, he had no charm: "Cha, what's the use of that," he said; "the animal is more frightened of us than we of him." 777

Of Vedda heroes, there was Yapal whose voice could be heard a hundred miles; and Balagala-seya whose arm was like a tree, who carried a bow the girth of a man's thigh, and whose arrow would go through anything; in yonder Balagala rock he lived. 773

Their dead they cover with leaves and abandon where they die, or deposit in shallow graves covered over with earth and thorns to keep the pigs away. 764

Kauwa never bathed; he confirmed the assertion by rubbing rolls of dirt off his abdomen. "Does your wife not complain," we asked. "If she did," was the characteristic reply, "I would strike her with my axe-head, and ask her why she did not think of that when she came to me." 515

Vedda nuptials are not burdened with ritual: A prospective husband, having gained the consent of the girl's parents, returns a few days later, it may be with a friend, and perhaps a monitor or two. Placing his bow and arrows on the roof of the hut, he enters. All partake of the feast of lizards and yams; the girl, seated next to her man, doles out his food, not partaking of a morsel until he has fed, and she has given him a chew of betel and water to wash his hands. The man usually throws in his lot with his father-in-law, but sometimes he takes the girl away, leaving a couple of arrows behind in exchange. The girl's parents may accompany them some distance saying by way of adieu, "Take our child and keep her well." In custom we may differ from these wild and simple folk, but in affection and solicitude are one. 583 585 591

291 When Kauwa was young his people wore threshed *riti** bark suspended
287 from the waist by a *riti* strip. A Vedda belle would sometimes trick
824 herself out in such adornments as a *riti* collar sewn at the back with
nuga† fibre, anklets of red ixora blooms, lotus petals in ear lobes and as
301 garlands round neck and loins, and circlets of strung wild jasmine round the hair knot. Difficult, though it be, to reconcile this picture with the wretched specimens one meets to-day, it must be admitted that Kauwa had no imagination to run loose. An old song tells of Vedda maidens whose heads were adorned with peacock plumes.

844 Vedda man and wife usually walk the forest together, and accouche-
ments often occur away from home and female assistance; the man then
845 does duty for midwife by placing the woman with her back to a rock
and two stones to her feet. For nine days after child-birth he feeds her
● 262 only on *gonala* yams and the flesh of monitors.

* *Antiaris toxicaria.*
† *Ficus altissima*

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787 To ignore such warnings would be to court failure or even disaster. When a *kotaka* (large gekko) quaintly cries "krok, krok," a Vedda will seriously lean towards it and ask, "Shall we shoot a monkey to-morrow?" "Krok," says the *kotaka*, and the questioner's face falls, for here no answer is good news. Then there is that subtle thing the *killo*, an evil 778 influence possessed by certain kinds of meat when eaten under circum- 262 stances too involved to explain. The flesh of pigs, peafowl, langurs and a species of fish (*urang*, *monerang*, *wandoorang*, *magurang*) are said to have this property; but here it would seem that the rhyming of the names has something to do with their evil association.

776 There is an interesting little spirit, belief in which (as with many of the other superstitions already mentioned) is as universal among the Sinhalese as the Veddas. *Bolhili*, *Vilirany*, or *Kunnu-yakkini** (dirty she-devil) is its name. It is said to have a nasty nack of grasping one's leg in the dark, and so making it wither to the thinness of an *illuk*-blade. The incarnation of a woman who died in child-birth it is thought to be, and comes moaning at night in the form of a light. The story is best told in the words of a solemnly sworn eye-witness:—Kalu Banda (the narrator) and his sister Balahamy were occupying a watch-hut in a *kurrukhan* field one dark night when they heard a moaning as of one in pain—"*andoa, andoa, oo oo oo.*" Kalu Banda, suspecting what it was, told his sister not to speak—for the *villirany* is shy of women and vanishes at the sound of their voice. He then charmed a little oil, and placing it some distance away, called out, "If you have a stomach-ache, come, rub some oil, and go away." A shadow appeared at which Kalu Banda [825] fired. On going to the spot, what should he find but a green blood-sucker with a red head! This is said to be the invariable discovery when the *bodili* is killed. The same is said of the devil bird; but here apparently the rule has exceptions; for I have met several people who shot at devil birds, and had a bird to show.

825 The identity of the devil-bird—*ulama* or *ulalena*——is still a matter of doubt; and it is a pity that those who have had the rare fortune to shoot this bird have not thought it worth their while to send it up for identification. Much of the mystery surrounding it is due to the fact that it cries only at night and has wide and sporadic circuits. That it has some sort of a crest, I think, there can be no doubt; also that it is a large bird mottled in its breast feathers like a jungle-hen. These particulars all my reliable informants (who shot the bird as it cried at night) have independently confirmed. It is supposed to be the brown wood owl (*Surnium indrani*) by some, the *Huhua nepalensis* by others. The theory that different birds are capable of uttering the devil-bird's cry, is, I think, quite untenable. Its note is too invariable and distinctive for that.

825 The cry of the *ulama*, like that of the owl (*bakumuna*) and *hanga*, is 787 said to be a portent, varying according to its direction. Should it come from the west, it forbodes rain; from the east, good luck; from the north, the visit of a relative or friend; from the south, a death. One of these birds hovered about our camp one night uttering its blood-curdling calls, now from this direction, now from that, baffling the ingenuity of 825 its interpreters! Its "hoo-oo" is most eerily human; but it has an even worse note, a gurgling chuckle, strongly suggestive of a person

*This is perhaps none other than the Ceylon loris.

λ [a species of lizard.—Ed.]

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attributed to Sinhalese influence, especially the substitution of the mortar for the tripod, the drum for the slapping of hands and thighs, and the introduction of the coconut scraper and betel leaves.

The *kirihoraka* (milk-chatty)* dance has for its object the co-operation of certain ancestral spirits (*Nae Yakku*) in hunting enterprises. The occasion for it is a period of repeated ill luck, which is attributed to the disfavour of these spirits, whose names are, *Kande Yakka*, the great hunter, his brother *Bilinde Yakka* and their wives *Kudu Hora* (nest thief) and *Pol Hora* (coconut thief) respectively; also *Hath-kudu Hora* (seven-nests thief), elder brother of the two she demons. Significant signs in the ceremony are the fine bubbles that form when the coconut milk is handled, and the manner in which the coconut divides; if the halves are equal the omen is good, in unequal, bad.

In a clearing was placed a mortar and on it a bowl containing a coconut with two arrows laid across the brim. Kaurala, the dancer, took care to eat no meat that morning. Having smeared his head with lime-juice and his body with saffron, he would have worn a white cloth borrowed for the purpose, had we not dissuaded him from covering his picturesque nudity, much to the disapproval of the other Veddas who feared the anger of the spirits invoked.

The dance began quietly enough. Taking up the coconut and an arrow, the performer clasped them together in his hands which he placed now on the shoulder, now on the head, now well before him, as he walked round the mortar chanting a supplication to *Kande Yakka*. Soon he began hopping alternately on each heel, making half-turns with the body so characteristic of Vedda dances, and sweeping his arms semi-circularly. Gradually the monotonous song loudened to the drum-beats, and more and more vigorous became the contortions of the dancer, whose shaggy hair covered his face and whose body streamed with sweat. So he danced for perhaps a half hour, when suddenly he became as one possessed. *Kande Yakka* had "covered" him. Shouting the fearful name he staggered to the mortar and, bending over the bowl, split the coconut in halves. He stood by panting, while the coconut was scraped, the milk prepared, and seven betel leaves were arranged around the sides of the bowl, which was then replaced on the mortar with a single arrow across it. The other arrow, with a betel leaf transfixed in its point, was now in the hands of the dancer who holding it at both ends resumed his movements. *Bilinde Yakka*, the spirit next invoked, soon possessed him. The dance was then continued to each of the other spirits, male and female, in turn. By each of these he was successively possessed. With each possession the strange, wild-eyed figure before us, apparently oblivious of his surroundings, shouted the name of the mastering demon,† and threw lifeless hands on the shoulders of one or other of the onlookers as if for support. Eventually, when the frenzy was at its height, he had just breath enough to gasp out the inspired message that the spirits were propitious and success was assured‡. With his forearm he indicated the length of the quarry's horns and, pointing to the heavens, the favourable time for starting. Then, taking up the two arrows and the bowl containing the two halves of the coconut, the milk and the betel leaves, he danced

*Coconut milk is the juice obtained by squeezing out with water the scraped kernel of the coconut.

†*Pana kiyanawa.*

‡*Hooy galgewara magalak alla thenawa.*

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descend; while two or three others, with perhaps a dog, beat the jungle above and start the animal, which is shot almost at the point of the guns.

There is no flesh the Vedda loves more than that of the wanderoo (grey langur). He will sometimes be seen to halt by a tree, and strike its trunk three resounding blows with his axe-head. This is to discover the whereabouts of the wanderoo. On hearing the sound, these animals, imagining it to be that of a falling tree or rock, give vent to the "a-he-hik" so characteristic of them when startled.

One afternoon Suthu Banda brought in a great langur slung on his shoulder, with its tail rove through its slit cheek. Within twenty-five minutes not a morsel of the animal remained. Disjointing the tail at the root, he dissected up a strip of dorsal skin in continuation of it as far as the neck; twisting this over a branch, he suspended and rapidly skinned the quarry. The meat was cut up in pieces and placed on large logs over a fire, the flames licking them all round. Bony segments, such as the spine, ribs and limbs, were pounded on a stone when half burnt, and then replaced on embers. The stomach and entrails were slit open and their contents merely scooped away with the fingers, and roasted. No water whatever was used! It was a truly sickening sight to see the relish with which the intestines with adherent faecal matter were greedily eaten. When we remarked on the repulsiveness of it, the gluttonous epicure calmly remarked, "Yes, the filth gets eaten right enough. What of it? It is good medicine. If you get a wanderoo what haven't you got? No marriage is like it." How true is the saying that the pig and the Vedda are one!

Fish* abound in the forest streams, all bony and very indifferent to the taste. The Veddas catch these, not with rods or nets, but with poisons. The fruit, bark or root of certain trees† is smashed up and thrown into pools or banked waterways. The water is then stirred; as it gets stained the fish become restless, and leap on to the bank, or turn belly upwards stupefied. They are collected and boiled with a little salt and a few chillies and eaten at once, or dried over a trestle like meat.

Let us see what sort of fare the jungle trees provide. Of fruit there is plenty in season:—*Mora*, *kong*, *galseembela*, *veera*, *palu*, *damba*, jak, guavas, *ulkantha*, *kibutoo*, *bulanga*, *kothalanga*, *leyaneya*, *karambe*, *madu* never eaten raw because it causes giddiness and vomiting!). The cabbages of palms such as *inthibada* and *kitulalla*. Yams:—*Gonala*, *katuala*, *hirathala*, *alalla*, in order of preference. Then there are the various barks they chew incessantly to stay the hunger of their long fasts:—*Demata*, *bolvilla* and *thambola*, all substitutes for betel; and *davata* for arecanut; and besides these the barks of *opulu*, *galseembela*, *mora*, *habatha*, *nuga*, *kalawa*, *galkara*, and in fact anything, however, insipid, provided it is not poisonous.

Their medicines are few. There is *gonkuttudalu* which they crush up with water and apply to the head for headaches; *meelalla-pothu* which they smash up with *chunam* and use as a dressing for wounds; but for abrasions of the foot they will as soon rub in a little sand with

* *Walapotho, angulue, lulo, kaluhanao, kanupatho, anilo* (eels), *maguro, kungo, kekeliyo, pethy, walihondo, sethalu, badapathalo, walihairiyo, piniweliyo, kovalayo, galpandurue.*

† *Kuhurumang-gedde, kala-mul, thimbiri-gedde, dhamba-pothu, pussal-mul.*

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HIVES

There are five varieties of honey bee in Ceylon :—The large *bambara* (*Apis dorsata*) that builds huge combs of very pure wax on bare hill sides and the large branches of lofty trees ; the *mee massa* (*Apis indica*) sweetest honey bee of all, whose combs are to be found in hollow trees, rock-clefts and within ant-hills ; the *dandual massa* (*Apis florea*), the smallest honey-bee in the world, that hives on rocks and boughs ; the *kanava massa* (Rosin or Dammar bee) a docile, stingless, friendly little creature whose long black combs within tree crevices yield a delicious, if heady, honey ; the *kotha massa*, an even smaller species, whose puny comb is hardly worth the taking.

Kanava and *kotha* combs are available all the year round ; they are the *pathinchikarayas* or stayers. If the Vedda is hungry it is for one of these he goes at a pinch. The *bambara* and *mee massa*, the most abundant honey makers, are seasonal in their habits ; and June and July are the great honey months ; the fruit season synchronising with this, marks these months as the festive time of the jungle ; then the Veddas leave their homes for caves and stream beds, take their fill, and have a surplus for barter.

On the flavours of honey the Veddas are connoisseurs. They can tell by tasting a comb the flower or medley of flowers that contributed to its making. That honey is relished most which prevails when the *mora*, *veera* and *galseembela* are in bloom.

Honey gathering is the master art of the Vedda. Supreme as he is in other jungle crafts, he is supremest in this. As he travels through the forest he is alive to the faintest hum, and no hive, however concealed, escapes him. His adroitness in tracking a bee to its lair is well described in a delightfully euphonious song they have (beginning, *Thomba, thomba Gomba me-na-na*), that tells of a Vedda Thutha who goes on the honey quest with his brothers Gomba and Naga. Thutha leads in the trail of a particular bee ; and as he goes he sings to his brothers, indicating various trees in which bees are busy ; but not decoyed by these, and with his eye steadily on the bee he first sighted, he follows it, till eventually it guides him to its hive within the skull of an elephant—*kolanathe gatche* (tree without leaves) as he quaintly describes.

The taking of any hive, other than that of the rock *bambara*, is a very simple thing for the Vedda. All he does is to climb the tree, steady himself at the hole containing the comb, and blow into it to drive the bees away. Then with his axe he enlarges the opening sufficiently to enable him to introduce a hand and secure the cache, stopping every now and then to blow inside or to slap an offending bee. He eats the comb at his perch, grubs and all, throwing down fragments to those below.

The *bambara* comb is quite a different proposition. These great bees build high on the precipitous sides of rocks ; their security lying not in their seclusion but in their inaccessibility. These hives are the prize of the bold and skilful only. A dangling cane at Westminster Abbey gave us some idea of the daring of the enterprise. To reach the combs ladders of vines are lowered from the summit of the rock ; and down these the collector descends ; as this does not bring him within arm's length of the hives, he has usually to rely on the use of a long stake. Sometimes

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and terrified they stood around the border. Then did the Saviour cause the pleasant Giridipa (Highlands) to come here near to them, and when they had settled there, he made it return to its former place. Then did the Saviour fold his rug of skin; the devas assembled, and in their assembly the Master preached them the doctrine. The conversion of many kotis of living beings took place and countless were those who came into the precepts of duty. The prince of the devas craved of him something to worship. The Conqueror, who had pure and blue black locks, passing his hand over his head, bestowed on him a handful of hairs. And he, receiving this in a splendid golden urn, when he had laid the hairs on a heap of many coloured gems, seven cubits round, piled up at the place where the Master had sat, covered them over with the thupa of sapphire and worshipped them.

"When Sambuddha had died, the thera Sarabhu, by his miraculous power, received, even from the funeral pyre, the collar bone of the Conqueror and brought it to Lanka and laid it in that same cetiya.

"The king Dutthagamini, dwelling there while he made war upon the Damilas (Tamils) built a mantle cetiya over it eighty cubits high. Thus was the Mahiyangana-thupa completed."

Barely four miles from Alutnuwara is the beautiful tank of Horabora Wewa whose vast waters have been cunningly trapped by a great earth work or bund, amidst a natural barrier of surrounding hills. As one sits here of an evening and looks across with field-glasses to the wilder opposite shore, small herds of deer may be seen feeding on the grassy edge between forest and lake; and in the drought, herds of elephants come to the water. White cranes fly overhead to roost on the bordering trees at dusk. Placed as it is in the heart of the Vedda country, this tank has long been associated with the Veddas. To-day only a few very destitute families of half-Veddas are to be found at Malgoda on the borders of the tank, living in the crudest of shelters, and feeding for the most part on the seeds of lotus pods (*olu*).

By an ancient sluice cut out of stone,* the tank-water is conducted along a channel to a wide stretch of paddy fields, now mostly in disuse owing to the paucity of the population. This brimming waterway, its grassy banks studded with beautiful trees, affords many a delightful picture, especially where the lotus thrives with its large, snow-white blossoms and no less beautiful leaves be-diamonded with sparkling droplets of water. Here halcyons fish all day. Up to recent years the tank itself was covered with lotus; but now, for some reason or other, there is none; and when no breeze stirs the glassy waters at midday, they reflect an ever changing panorama of dazzling clouds only broken where a darter or cormorant gambols.

It is not surprising that so beautiful a tank should have inspired a fine poem, of which I have attempted a poor translation that does scant justice to the euphonious idioms, the long vowel cadences, the alliterations, and rhymes of the Sinhalese original.

*Tradition has it that two giants (*yodhayas*) sat here on opposite sides of a crack in the great rock, and each, seizing that part on which he was seated with his hands, and thrusting with his foot against the other, wrenched the rocks apart, making an outlet for the water!